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3 NEW ZINGERS FROM OLYMPUS

Three Special Zuiko Entries

Olympus showed some interesting glass at this year's P.M.A, and although a bit late in delivering I am happy to report that I have some of them in hand, or on the bench, at last. The reader is advised that this next section is not for the financially faint hearted!

OLYMPUS ZUIKO AUTO-T 350MM F/2.8

As has been repeatedly stressed in these pages, you don't get speed without paying for it. The price is not simply monetary, it is also in the bulk of a lens. The funnel has to be big to gather enough water, or, in this case, light. The front element of the Olympus 350mm f/2.8 may be measured in inches (approx 4 3/4), rather than sissy millimeters. Obviously the Zuiko Auto-T 350mm f/2.8 is a speciality lens applicable to action photography in low light levels where fast shutter speeds are desirable. Obviously it is not your everyday lens. Price apart, it's a bit heavy to carry around on a Sunday photo-jaunt to the park. The point is, with this lens, as with all high-speed optics, it is there for those who need it.

The 350mm Olympus tele is an internal-focusing type; that is, when you rotate the focusing barrel the lens does not grow physically longer or shorter. Focusing is from infinity (which has a slight compensatory run-on) down to a fraction under ten feet, and it gets across this range with a silklike glide of just about 180~ rotation. Focusing is a joy both mechanically and optically.

The front element is rather large as mentioned. It has a 142mm maximum barrel diameter, so the lens is equipped with a filter slot which accepts 46mm filters. These screw into the filter carrier which then slides into the rear of the lens somewhat ahead of the aperture ring. The filter holder is locked in place with a turn screw. Obviously such an optic requires a built-in, rotatable tripod mount which may be locked at any point. The tripod mount is tapped four times along its length for tripod mounting at "best balance' position. Now this may seem a small thing to you, but it is rather important when working with such a lens and a camera with a motor drive and who knows what else attached to it.

Olympus stresses the importance of using the leather zip-on lens cover when the lens is not in use. The front element, being of soft, low dispersion glass, is more vulnerable to damage than conventional optical glass. Use the lens cover or buy a very large clear filter! Actually using a filter over the front of this optic, even if there were one large enough, would probably somewhat diminish the optical quality.

At it's closest focus (approximately ten feet) the lens offers an image ratio of 1:7. Opticial construction is of nine elements in seven groups; the diaphragm is fully automatic. The lens shade is a pull-out type. The lens comes with a massive aluminum carrying case, and you even get a natty carrying strap with "Olympus' embroidered on it. The lens does have strap lugs.

Naturally you would expect such a paragon to perform, and perform it does. With such a bright image thrown on the focusing screen it's hard to mess up focusing even at dusk. The lens allows one to use the slow, fine-resolution films well beyond the conventional dimness barriers associated with other telephoto lenses.

Can you handhold it? Well, yes you can, by virtue of the increased shutter speeds permitted by the fast maximum aperture and the excellent resolution even at f/2.8. On the other hand, the lens alone weighs in at 3900 grams, or eight pounds ten ounces, to which you would add the camera and probably a motor drive. You can forget the old rule of thumb about shutter speeds being the reciprocal of the facal length for handholding, etc. The 350mm f/2.8 Zuiko Auto-T is a tripod lens. By the by, the lens operates nicely with the matched 1.4X tele converter, which doubles the lens' utility.

OLYMPUS ZUIKO REFLEX 500MM f/8

From a 350mm high-speed tele, barely handholdable, to a 500mm f/ 8 which is scarcely longer than the palm of your hand is a strange jump, but that's the interesting thing about photography.

All things considered, the 500mm Zuiko catadioptric is an excellent lens and is certainly an ideal traveling companion, since it measures a mere 97mm or 3.8 inches. Catadioptric lenses of the collapsed Cassegrain type are now so common as

to be unremarkable, but the Zuiko 500mm f/8 cat is a nice version, well designed and executed with careful attention having been paid to flare and the skewing of off-axis light rays.

Since the lens barrel diameter falls just about within acceptable dimensions (81mm, or 3.2 inches), Olympus has opted that the filter should be mounted over the front of the lens and not at the rear. This is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing since many manufacturers who decided on the rear element filter mount opted to screw that filter into the rear of the lens, requiring you to use a key tool to mount and dismount the filter. A difficult and often potentially dangerous "opps' type operation. The best solution is the filter slot type mounting, except where you might want to use a polarizing filter, there being no way to rotate a rear-mounted polarizer, either screw-in or filter slot. OK, so let's mount a filter over the front of the lens. Fine, except that filters can get expensive since they are, in the case of the Olympus Zuiko Reflex 500mm f/8, 72mm in diameter.

The lens features a pull-out lens shade. It will work with a tele-converter, but care should be exercised when using such devices. It might be best to use the 1.4X converter by Olympus.

The lens produces excellent images with virtually no brightness rolloff towards the edges of the field. It focuses easily and can get down to a minimum focus of four meters or 13 feet. Close focus of 13 feet is not remarkable but adequate. It's a good traveling lens for those who wish super-tele capabilities without the excessive weight and bulk of a conventional super-tele lens. Definition is excellent and contrast is very good.

OLYMPUS ZUIKO AUTO-S 40mm F/2

It may seem a bit odd in this age of wide ratio zooms and super speed wide-angle prime lenses to offer yet another variation on the so called "standard lens'. I cannot say that I am entirely stunned by the thought either. Pancake and semipancake standard lenses in the 40mm focal length or thereabouts seem to have a spasmodic appeal to the camera/lens buying public. But, to give Olympus their due, the 40mm f/2 is a nicely designed compact 40mm that offers an angle of view of 56~. At a mere 25mm in length it is quite compact, and by moving the iris diaphragm control foreward to the front of the lens barrel, the lens is also fumble-free in operation. However, since the diaphragm ring is also the filter mount ring some care must be exercised especially when using a polarizing filter. Filter size is 49mm. Minimum focus for this lens is a very close 0.3 meters, or 11.8 inches, which in turn offers an image ratio of about 1:3. Little else need be said of this optic except that it is sharp, well behaved with good flare suppression, and adequately fast at a maximum aperture of f/2. Certainly it weighs almost nothing--140 grams, or 4.9 ounces.

SPECIFICATIONS

LENS: Olympus Zuiko Auto-T 350mm f/2.8

TYPE: Internal focusing, high speed, high resolution, telephoto; autornatic diaphragm

CONSTRUCTION: 9 elements in 7 groups; special low dispersion glasses used

ANGLE OF VIEW: 7 degrees

APERTURE RANGE: F2.8 to f/32

FOCUSING RANGE: 10 feet (3 meters) to infinity

FINISH: Black

DIMENSIONS: 280mm (11 in) X 142mm (5.6 in)

WEIGHT: 8 pounds 10 oz (3900 grams)

FILTER SIZE: 46mm via rear filter slot

MOUNT: Olympus-fixed

PRICE: $4150.00

DISTRIBUTOR: Olympus Camera Corp., Crossways Park, Woodbury, N.Y. 11797

LENS: Olympus Zuiko Reflex 500mm f/8

TYPE: Fixed-aperture, collapsed Cassegrain, mirror lens CONSTRUCTION: 5 elements in 2 groups

ANGLE OF VIEW: 5 degrees

APERTURE RANGE: F/8 fixed, single aperture

FOCUSING RANGE: 13 feet (4 meters) to infinity with extended run on

DIMENSIONS: 97mm (3.8 in) X 81mm (3.2 in)

WEIGHT: 20.8 oz (590 grams)

FILTER SIZE: 72mm

MOUNT: Olympus-fixed

PRICE: $500.00

DISTRIBUTOR: Olympus Camera Corp., Crossways Park, Woodbury, N.Y. 11797

LENS: Olympus Zuiko Auto-S 40mm f/2

TYPE: Compact standard lens

CONSTRUCTION: 6 elements in 6 groups

ANGLE OF VIEW: 56 degrees

FOCUSING RANGE: 3 meters (11.8 in) to infinity

FINISH: Black and chrome

DIMENSIONS: 25mm (.98 in) X 60mm (2.4 in)

WEIGHT: 4.9 oz (140 grams)

FILTER SIZE: 49mm

MOUNT: Olympus-fixed

PRICE: $142.00

DISTRIBUTOR: Olympus Camera Corp., Crossways Park, Woodburry, N.Y. 11797

Photo: 1. A group of Olympus optics. On the camera the truly excellent 350mm, internal focusing, f/2.2 "speed-tele'. In the center the "pancake' 40mm, f/2 standard lens, with the ultra compact 500mm, f/8 "Cat' to the left.

Photo: 2. The Olympus "speed' 350mm, f/2.8 tele optic. This lens offers speed, reach, and the advantages of internal focusing coupled with special glass construction. Filters are used in a rear filter slot.

Photo: 3. The ultra compact, lightweight 500mm f/8 fixed aperture mirror lens. Filters are 72mm and are used "over' the front of the lens.

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